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ORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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September 29, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR CAPTAIN ROBINSON

FROM: Tony Lake and Roger Morris

SUBJECT: Draft Memorandum to the President on Contingency Study

We think the basic memorandum to the President should be extensively re-worked, both as a matter of general concept and specific points. It does not adequately lay out the questions to be asked and alternative answers, but rather makes a number of assumptions. The contingency group should not be arguing at this point for or against the decision. As we understand it, our job is to present clearly and fully all the implications of the action, should the President decide to do it.

Our criticisms in summary are:

- The Present draft offers only one package of actions. It should present alternative military programs for achieving the objective.
- There is no analysis, beyond an assertion of "reasonable expectation", of the predictable results of the action.
- There is an adequate treatment of possible reactions ~~from~~ others, but no clear presentation of the probability of those reactions or of what we might do in each case.
- There is no adequate treatment of our specific diplomatic objective, how we would measure success, or how we would respond to a favorable reaction from NVN.

In our view, the study must assume that the President has decided:

- That NVN had judged our present policy untenable and was therefore settling in for a slow but sure victory, notwithstanding a decrease in infiltration, etc. and,

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-- That nothing more we could sensibly do on the diplomatic/political side -- such as putting some light between us and Saigon -- would bring around either our critics at home (who help determine Hanoi's judgment) or the post-Ho Chi Minh leadership.

*ie give
up T(hin)
or MW?*

The memorandum should make it clear that we believe the President should be prepared to accept two operational concepts:

why? the action must be brutal and sustainable. Brutal, because of the proven tenacity of NVN in the face of actions which did not strike at their existence in society. Sustainable because we must assume that even in this extreme case they will be evasive and rely on pressures in this country to deflect our action, and that later packages will be required.

why? that the action would be self-contained. The President would have to decide beforehand, the fateful question of how far we will go. He cannot, for example, confront the issue of using tactical nuclear weapons in the midst of the exercise. He must be prepared to play out whatever string necessary in this case.

*why not?
control?*

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